

ORIGINAL COMMUNICATIONS.

ARBORIVITAL TREATMENT : GENERAL PARALYSIS OF THE INSANE.

BY ROBERT. T. COOPER, M.A., M.D.

TOWARDS the close of November of last year I was sent for to see the son of an old patient of mine, long since gone to his rest, whose long career as editor of the *Illustrated Missionary News* made him a man of mark, and well remembered to this day by many.

The son, aged 46, was at this time a candidate for the Incurable Home at Streatham, and on the canvassing ticket was this description of his case : “ Suffering from rheumatic arthritis, rendering all his limbs useless. He has a wife and eight children, five under fourteen years of age. He has been engaged as colporteur and missionary pastor in Western America and in England,” &c.

The case, then, is a well-known one, and admits of no doubt whatever as to its distressing nature, whatever difference of opinion there may be as to its nomenclature.

The following were the notes I took of his case when coming under me, 19th of November, 1896 :—

Two and a half years ago, when working at a desk that required his writing while standing up, and during a time of great mental unrest, he found the tendo Achillis on both sides gradually drawing up until he had to stand almost on tiptoe ; this and other symptoms developed so rapidly that in two days after he was completely invalided. Since then he has been going on from bad to worse, gradually getting weaker but without suffering any pain except when interfered with by forcible stretching, &c., as has been adopted among the various remedial means resorted to. Before these symptoms set in he had been feeling very well and had walked a fair distance in the country three days previously to the drawing up of the feet. In his present state he lies completely powerless in bed ; he sits up a little during the day, but the chief trouble is with the bowels, which are too free, and both urine and stools were passed unconsciously in sleep, which occasions his attendants much trouble. The muscles of the body are much dwindled and very feeble, the joints look large, but more, it would seem to me, from the ends

of the bones being prominent, owing to emaciation of adjoining structures than from actual joint swelling. His appetite is ravenous ; there is no thirst, and the water is clear.

Tactile sensation and knee jerks present.

As the patient could not properly describe his history and his symptoms, often dropping off in the middle of his sentences, which were often incoherent and his speech thick, I asked his attendant to furnish particulars, which run thus : “ November 27, 1896, J. H. P., aged 46 ; until about two and a half years ago enjoyed perfect health, with the exception of an annual attack of hay fever and a sort of a fit he had four or five years ago, which the doctor attributed to indigestion. A total abstainer from childhood and a non-smoker, he used to say his good health was his fortune.

“ His present disease was preceded by six months' intense anxiety, when he was out of a situation and had a wife and seven children to support, and another expected.

“ It first showed itself in his feet, more especially the right, with slight swelling and feverishness and intense pain in the part affected. He used laughingly to tell us he had flatulence in his feet, for each time the soles of his feet were pressed he used to discharge wind through his mouth.

“ All his joints were in turn attacked in the same way, the spot in most pain being always partially relieved by pressure, which caused the ejection of wind. After a few months the muscles of his right leg became contracted. About this time he became an in-patient of the West London Hospital. Here they forced his leg straight and put on a splint. After suffering many things of many doctors he returned home, but was soon sent to the Mildmay Cottage Hospital, where the same leg was put up in plaster of Paris.

“He became gradually more helpless, and after a few hours without movement every limb would seem as if locked in a vice, and only by much perseverance and great pain could he move them at all.

“Soon after leaving Mildmay Hospital he was taken to King's College Hospital, but had to endure so much from the forcing of the limbs and the taking of medicine, which seemed to increase his sufferings, that he refused the medicine and was dismissed.

“After this, during this last summer, a doctor at Mortlake attended him, and he somewhat improved and was able to take daily drives in a bath-chair, and some hope was entertained of his recovery. But he became worse again, and as the doctor was going out of town he sent him to the Westminster Hospital, where he remained ten or eleven weeks, until removed home a fortnight ago. At Westminster they tried the electric battery—which caused him dreadful suffering—massage, and sulphur bandages besides ; according to the House Surgeon, trying every drug they had got. When he had been at the hospital a few weeks some diarrhea set in, and he has never been quite free from it since. During this time they gave him at least two ounces of brandy a day. After this he rather suddenly regained partial use of his limbs, and his pains almost entirely left him, but a few days after his brain became affected. At times he did not even know his own wife, imagined the place full of demons, &c., &c., and made two or three attempts to take his life. But directly we told him we were going to take him to his mother's it had a quieting effect upon him, and since he has been here we have had no trouble of this sort, but on the least excitement he becomes talkative, says strange things, and cannot sleep.

“He almost constantly has an unnatural craving for food. Perhaps I should also add the sight of his right eye has become dim.”

On November 19, 1896, I gave *Arbutus Andrachne* ϕ A., and now, on November 27th, the above letter goes on to say : “Since taking your powder these symptoms have remained the same, but his joints are rather less rigid, but without strength to use them. The first day or two he slept better, and seemed drowsy all day.”

The same dose was then repeated, and on November 30th the report came in—“More sleepy, but seems weak, and stools and urine pass unconsciously.” A dose of *Lobelia* was then given without effecting any noticeable change, so that on December 2nd I selected *Stramonium* ϕ A. for him as being altogether better indicated. From this moment he seemed to steadily improve, and on December 4th I learned that he no longer soiled his bed ; his brain as well as his whole body became stronger ; he began to sit up and to improve every day until the end of December, when, having been elected to the Home for

Incurables, he was taken there. My notes of his case run thus : December 9th.—Urines freely and perspires freely, but still wets his bed ; stools six times in twenty-four hours, but is conscious and gives warning ; feels very much better. Nil. December 16th.—Stronger, skin no longer perspiring, urine passes freely and naturally, takes food well, is putting on flesh, sleep good, bowels confined. Nil. December 23rd.—Sat up for the first time for breakfast for 2½ years. Nil. December 28th.—Sits up well in his chair every day, and is in every way stronger in mind and in body. It was on this day (December 28th) I sent a second time *Stramon.* ϕ A., as he had to leave the following day. For a week after entering the Home he continued to make rapid progress. Then he began to get sleepless, and in consequence a soporific—Morphia, I believe it was—was given him. Whether, in consequence of this or not, I am not prepared to say, but in a day or two after his mind became entirely unhinged, and he had to be taken away to an insane asylum. From this time till last Saturday I heard nothing whatever of him, and then, October 30th, received the following letter, which speaks for itself, from his mother :—

LANCASTER ROAD, W.,
“ October 30, 1897.

“ MY DEAR DR. C.,—I ought to have written to you a month or two ago to tell you how much better my son H. was. He has been quite right in his mind for eight months, and has gained strength of body and 2 stone $\frac{3}{4}$ lb. in weight ; he has the use of his hands and arms, but can't stand or walk ; he came here from the Asylum last Thursday fortnight.”

And the letter goes on : “I have no doubt that we are much indebted to you and to your medicine for the improvement commenced before he left here ; he is able to sit up all day now.—Yours truly obliged,

“ A. P.

This man is now able to earn a livelihood by oil-painting—an art in which he had showed some dexterity before his illness, but which at the time of my first seeing him had been completely lost. He keeps on view sketches he did from time to time in his illness, and

which look more like the feeble efforts of a child than the serious execution of an artist. My justification for terming the case one of general paralysis of the insane rather than rheumatic arthritis is obvious from the narration of the patient's sufferings from the very beginning, and from the general drift of the symptoms. The patient at present is in every way well, except that the lower limbs are paralysed and that occasionally he is seized with sudden cramping up of the whole body.

There is every reason to suppose he will never again see the inside of a lunatic asylum, and I have great reason to hope that even his limbs will regain power ; but whether or not, the influence of *Stramonium*, when allowed to act in a manner that is in accordance with the workings of Nature, illustrated as it most certainly is by this case, is a sufficient justification for publication of the case at this early stage of its progress. *Stramonium* was called for by the general painlessness that prevailed throughout the body as well as by the character of the weakness and of the mental disturbance.

30A, George Street, Hanover Square, W.
3rd November, 1897.
